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WORKERS WORLD

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MAY 13, 2010 Vol. 52, No. 18 50¢

ONE MILLION ON MAY DAY DEMAND:

Stop Arizona apartheid law

By Monica Moorehead

It was a significant event that not even the big-business-owned press could ignore, hard as they wanted to do. May Day 2010 in the United States was the largest national outpouring of protests since the May Day Immigrant Uprising of 2006, when millions of people, the great majority of Latin American and Caribbean origin, took to the streets against the reactionary Sensenbrenner bill that denied full immigrant rights.

This May 1, according to CNN, an estimated 1 million people — between one-quarter and a half million in Los Angeles alone — protested in at least 70 U.S. cities against the Arizona bill, SB 1070, which creates an apartheid state by legalizing the racial profiling of immigrants and people of color. See coverage in this issue on New York and other cities.

This law stipulates that the police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials can stop, arrest and detain anyone they "suspect" of being undocumented and eventually deport them. The law also sets into motion a 50-mile militarized zone between Arizona and the Mexican border.

Many of the protests called major attention to the national and international boycott of Arizona's tourism, with popular signs in English and Spanish reading, "We are all Arizona" and "Todos somos Arizona."

While the Arizona law propelled tens of thousands of veteran and new activists into motion, May Day — International Workers Day — afforded the opportunity for foreign-born and native-born workers of all ages and nationalities, documented and undocumented, to raise and connect broader issues including jobs, not racism; the right to health care, education and housing; an end to war and occupation; and much more. In the midst of a deepening worldwide capitalist economic crisis, workers and oppressed people are linking their struggles and refusing to scapegoat other workers.

Thousands march in Arizona

In Arizona and California, tens of thousands came out for full immigrant rights and against SB 1070.

Tucson, Ariz.

About 20,000 people marched and rallied in **Tucson** in the largest outpouring since May Day 2006. The protest was militant, spirited and defiant. The demands for "Legalization now!" and "Repeal SB 1070 now!" dominated the speeches. Youth speakers and entertainers kept the

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SPECIAL
MAY DAY
COVERAGE

In the U.S. 5-8

International protests 10

WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD, ABOVE; PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA, BELOW

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‘It’s about solidarity’

Temple nurses win strike

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Chanting, “Hey, hey, ho, ho, it’s back to work we go!” nurses and allied professional staff at Temple University Hospital returned to their jobs on April 30 after a successful strike that lasted more than four weeks. The nurses’ victory strikes a blow for organized labor in the Philadelphia area.

The jubilant workers were sent off by a small but enthusiastic rally of supporters and family members outside the hospital on North Broad Street in Philadelphia for the start of the 7 p.m. shift. To bolster their victory, the members of the Pennsylvania Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) had the opportunity to jeer at scab workers who were leaving the hospital on luxury charter buses for the very last time. TUH had hired the scabs in an attempt to defeat the union.

Temple management had tried to use the economic crisis as a battering ram to force workers to take a concession-laden contract. The workers’ solidarity and their determination to stand up to the hospital’s blatant effort to break their union finally forced management to greatly improve what they had called their “last, best offer,” put on the table in September.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE
Betsey Piette on the picket line during Temple strike.

Another key factor contributing to the victory was the growing support from other unions and community organizations made evident in a major rally outside the hospital on April 21.

After weeks when management refused to bend, progress in negotiations started a few days after this rally. The result was a contract with most of the wage and benefit provisions sought by the union.

The final agreement also eliminated anti-union provisions sought by management. These included a “gag” clause that prevented nurses from speaking of problems in delivering care, an attempt to eliminate agency shop, and a proposal for separate contract term lengths for the nurses and the professional staff.

More than 50 workers, students and community activists, striking Temple workers and their family members attended an April 29 benefit in West Philadelphia to support the strike. Jobs with Justice, the Philadelphia International Action Center, the Bail Out the People Movement, the A-Space and Health Care NOW sponsored the action. This benefit, earlier aimed at collecting funds and supplies of diapers, canned goods, paper products and other items needed by strikers and their families, also ended up being a victory celebration.

Some 97 percent of the members approved the new contract, which also partially restored a tuition reimbursement benefit for workers’ dependents that management had eliminated from the existing contract in March 2009. This was the final sticking point on the last day of intense negotiations.

The strike of more than 1,500 workers began on March 31. During the strike, TUH management paid an estimated $5 million a week to a notorious strikebreaking company, Health Source Global Staffing, to secure replacement workers. These scabs’ salaries averaged $5,500 a week, plus transportation, housing, meals and security.

PASNAP has pointed out that what management spent in just two weeks of the strike would have covered all the additional costs of the four-year contract sought by the union.

Temple may owe unemployment benefits

Temple’s headache may not be over. Shortly after a contract was ratified on April 29, PASNAP executive director Bill Cruice announced that TUH “could be on the hook for a lot of money.” A wrinkle in Pennsylvania labor law might lead to a decision that the 28-day strike was a lockout by management. “It could amount to $1.5 million,” Cruice estimated.

When Temple University Hospital eliminated the tuition reimbursement benefit in 2009, PASNAP filed unfair labor practice charges with the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board. PASNAP charged that TUH had to negotiate that kind of change since it was a benefit from an existing contract.

Although the union’s contract came to an end in September, its members continued to work. In January the Labor Relations Board ruled against the hospital, ordering them to pay refunds to eligible workers. Temple responded by appealing to the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court, asking for a stay with the Labor Relations Board. The court denied Temple’s request on March 16.

On March 26, after giving the hospital a strike notice one week earlier, Cruice informed management that the union would continue to work under the terms of their old contract as long it included the tuition benefit. Despite the labor board ruling, Temple management refused this request, an act the union claims constitutes a lockout under state law.

Up to the end of negotiations Temple’s management wanted the union to drop its opposition to the hospital’s appeal of the labor board’s ruling on the tuition reimbursement and agree not to seek back payment for workers, but PASNAP refused.

In the end TUH had to agree to set up a $550,000 account to fund back payments. In addition, it appears that PASNAP’s resilience led to hospital management announcing a new tuition benefit for the rest of the hospital’s 5,000-person staff.

Even as jubilant workers gathered to return to work on April 30, Temple University Hospital’s management tried to get in one last jab by issuing an edict that workers could not wear union buttons or t-shirts with the PASNAP logo once they entered the building. Union president Maureen May counseled members to keep their buttons on.

“Wear them and if asked to take them off, ask if refusal to do so could result in disciplinary action,” May said. “If they say yes, take them off, but notify the union and we will file an unfair labor practice.

“It’s not about a pin,” May told her members, “It’s about union solidarity and we will win!” □

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Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
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National Office
55 W. 17 St.
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617-522-6626
Fax 617-983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313-459-0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston
TX 77253-3454
713-503-2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 W Pico Blvd
Suite # 207
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323-306-6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia
PA 19101
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego
CA 92163
619-692-0355

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco
CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

‘Confederate heritage’ and distortions of history

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Virginia Gov. Robert McDonnell recently issued a proclamation designating April as “Confederate Heritage Month.” This was done initially without even mentioning the Atlantic slave trade or the economic system that was built from the labor of African people brought to North America between the 17th and 19th centuries.

Virginia was the first British colony where Africans were enslaved in the region that later became known as the United States. Beginning in August 1619, when 20 Africans arrived on a slave ship at Jamestown, the process of exploitation and oppression involving millions of people would define the character of North America for another four centuries.

These Africans brought to Virginia initially were designated as indentured servants, as were many Europeans who came during the 17th century to the British colonies in North America. But by 1670 approximately 2,000 Africans had fallen victim to the system of chattel slavery in this region of the continent.

This historical episode in Virginia was not the beginning of slavery or the Atlantic slave trade. Slavery as a world economic system took firm root in the Western Hemisphere beginning in the early 16th century. In 1503 the Spanish directed their attention toward the African continent, seeking a vast reservoir of free untapped labor power.

Initially the Indigenous peoples of North America were transported to the Caribbean islands of Santo Domingo (later Haiti) and Cuba in astronomical numbers for the purpose of chattel slavery. Indigenous peoples suffered and died in great numbers as a result of the barbaric treatment meted out by the European slave traders and owners, often carried out under the rationale of spreading Christianity.

With the conquest of Peru by Francisco Pizarro and Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral in the early 16th century, the stage was set for the mass capture and importation of African slaves into South America, the Caribbean and later North America. As early as the mid-1500s, the Native peoples of the Caribbean had virtually become extinct as a result of the genocidal social and economic policies of the European colonialists.

The African population became the numerically dominant group in the so-called West Indies by the middle of the 16th century, serving as the principal engine of economic growth for the Spanish colonialists. Soon afterwards the British adventurers embarked upon the trade in African labor as well, which they proceeded to carry out under charters issued by Elizabeth I and James I.

Today’s ‘debate’ over slavery

After the action taken by Gov. McDonnell, a debate has ensued around the historical significance of slavery in the U.S. Some conservatives and neoconfederates claim that the upholding of the confederate heritage of the South was not intended to be an act of racist denial of the suffering of African people.

These same apologists for the secession of 11 states from the Union government in Washington would go as far as saying that the splitting of the country in 1860-61 had nothing to do with slavery as an economic system but was based on the notion of “states’ rights.” They say that Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee and the others withdrew and provoked a civil war because they believed states should be allowed to decide what economic and political system would prevail.

Then there are the false ideas surrounding the character of slavery and its economic impact on U.S. development and on other Western countries as a whole. Southern historians and their supporters advanced notions that the system of exploitation was relatively benign and that Africans were content to work for white plantation owners and other ruling-class interests that were dominant in the Southern U.S.

However, starting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a new current of historians arose who looked at the material benefits that the ruling classes in the United States and Western Europe gained as a result of slavery. Rather than viewing the system of slavery as benign, African-American and other progressive historians argued that the bondage Africans were subjected to created a labor system that not only led to the accumulation of tremendous wealth but also created the conditions for the rise of industrial capitalism.

W.E.B. DuBois wrote in his book “Black Reconstruction” that the system of slavery stripped all rights away from Africans and subjected them to the worst forms of exploitation and degradation. This system not only made enormous profits for the slave owners but destroyed any semblance of family life for the African people.

DuBois notes, “[Black people] could be sold — actually sold as we sell cattle with no reference to calves or bulls, or recognition of family. It was a nasty business. The white South was properly ashamed of it and continually belittled and almost denied it.”

The African-American historian continues, “But it was a stark and bitter fact. Southern papers of the Border States were filled with advertisements: ‘I wish to purchase fifty Negroes of both sexes from 6 to 30 years of age for which I will give the highest cash prices.’” (“Black Reconstruction,” p. 11)

Defenders of the confederacy nevertheless continue to make false claims that Africans were treated reasonably well under the slave system. They have also said that the neoconfederate movement is a mechanism for the descendants of slave owners and those who fought to preserve slavery to honor their heritage. According to many of the neoconfederates, they are not racist in their recognition and championing of this legacy.

A New York Times column by Newsweek editor Jon Meacham regarding the declaration of “Confederate Heritage Month” in Virginia challenges the notion of a nonracist recognition of confederate symbolism and heritage in the South.

“If neo-Confederates are interested in history, let’s talk history,” wrote Meacham. “Since Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Confederate symbols have tended to be more about white resistance to black advances than about commemoration. In the 1880s and 1890s, after fighting Reconstruction with terrorism and after the Supreme Court struck down the 1875 Civil Rights Act, states began to legalize segregation.” (April 11)

Meacham continues: “For white supremacists, iconography of the ‘Lost Cause’ was central to their fight; Mississippi even grafted the Confederate battle emblem onto its state flag. But after the Supreme Court allowed segregation in Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896, Jim Crow was basically secure. There was less need to rally the troops, and Confederate imagery became associated with the most extreme of the extreme: the Ku Klux Klan.”

Legacy of Virginia slave rebellions

Despite claims to the contrary, Africans revolted against slavery and sought to build an independent existence outside the plantation system. Perhaps the most glaring conflict over the significance of slavery among some whites and African Americans is the effort underway in Richmond, Va., to gain proper recognition of a burial ground for enslaved Africans. The site, which is currently covered up by a parking lot owned by Virginia Commonwealth University, is reported to have contained a detention facility for rebellious Africans and a location for carrying out executions.

A brochure issued by the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project states that “undoubtedly the area’s greatest significance is the fact that, for the three decades preceding the Civil War, it was, after New Orleans, the largest market for enslaved Africans in this country.” (“An Appeal to All People of Good Will: The Case of Reclaiming Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom”)

“This was where many of the 300,000 to 350,000 men, women and children of African descent who were sold from Virginia to plantations in the Deep South were auctioned off. At the same time, it is also a story of incredible courage. From Gabriel’s Rebellion to the mass escape on the hijacked slave ship Creole to thousands of individual acts of rebellion, this continuous resistance to injustice is a tribute to the deep resilience of the human spirit.”

Gabriel was captured and later executed at the site which is today a parking lot owned by VCU. The Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project and other organizations are demanding that this area be not only recognized with a historical marker as it is today, but also that a more extensive memorial be constructed that accounts for the significant legacy of slavery within the economic and political development of Virginia.

Solidarity and the National Question

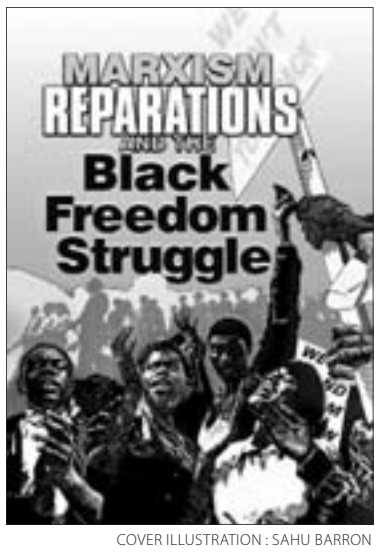
There can be no real improvement in race relations or the resolution of the national question in the U.S. without the recognition of the horrors of slavery by the ruling class and the payment of reparations for the centuries of stolen, free labor.

In the 21st century, with the election of the first African-American president, the U.S. has witnessed the rise of a new crop of racist and neofascist organizations. This resurgence of racism comes at a time when the U.S. is facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The purpose of this rightward shift, which is supported and encouraged by the corporate media, is to further divide the working class along racial lines and to deflect attention away from the bank bailouts and other direct handouts to the capitalists. Corporate support for the so-called “Tea Party” is designed for the same purpose: to split off white workers from the struggles of the working class and to promote racism against African Americans, Latinos/as, Asians, Indigenous and other oppressed peoples.

Fighting this racism and other forms of bigotry can only be effectively carried out through international solidarity. White workers and the working class as a whole must unite to fight racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

It is through such forms of solidarity that the working class and nationally oppressed movements can overcome these continuing attempts to divide the people. Such solidarity will strengthen the struggle against racism and national oppression and weaken the hegemony of international finance capital. □



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MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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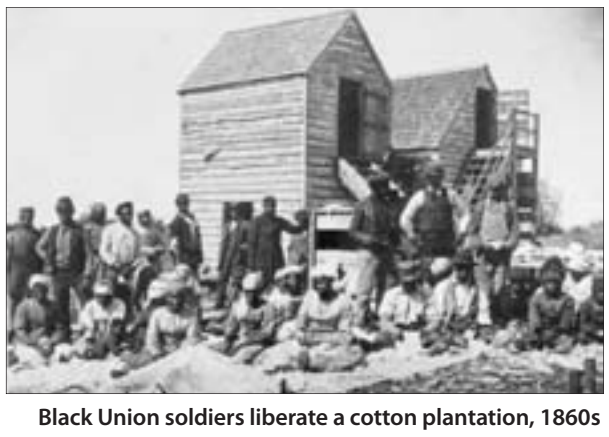
Black Union soldiers liberate a cotton plantation, 1860s

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An unnatural catastrophe

Gulf oil spill threatens vast region

By Gene Clancy

"In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the first, tangible success; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be of quite a different, mainly of quite opposite, character."

— Frederick Engels in "Dialectics of Nature."

In the Gulf of Mexico, a churning, swelling slick of dense, rust-colored oil the size of Puerto Rico is threatening to overwhelm a huge portion of not only the natural habitat, but also the human infrastructure of the entire southeastern coast of the United States. The oil leak is an ongoing calamity that some experts say could become the worst petroleum spill in history.

The immediate cause of the disaster was an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon, a drilling platform owned by British Petroleum that capsized and then sank into the Gulf of Mexico. Eleven oil workers were killed; since then more than 1 million gallons of oil have gushed from the damaged wellhead, which is almost a mile below sea level.

At risk are not only the vast salt marshes and wetlands of Louisiana, the white sand beaches of Florida, and a huge number of plant and animal species, but also the livelihoods and lives of millions of people.

George Maul, an expert in oceanography at the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, has warned that the Loop Current, a branch of the Gulf Stream that flows past the entire East Coast of the U.S., may soon penetrate the oil spill. If that happens, oil could eventually wash ashore as far north as Cape Hatteras, N.C.

Experts have cited the wetlands around New Orleans as a first line of defense against hurricanes. These, too, are in mortal danger from the spill.

BP, despite advertising that its initials stand for "Beyond Petroleum" and touting how "green" it is, has a poor record of safety and maintenance. Like all big businesses, it is mainly interested in profits. On April 28, it reported a profit of more than $6 billion in the first quarter of 2010, up 135 percent from a year ago.

In November 2007, BP pled guilty to a misdemeanor and paid a $20 million fine related to a 2005 oil spill in the North Slope of Alaska, the result of a severely corroded pipeline and a safety valve failure. The federal judge presiding over the case put BP on probation for three years and said the 201,000-gallon oil spill was a "serious crime" that could have been prevented had BP spent more time and funds investing in pipeline upgrades and a "little less emphasis on profit."

A month earlier, BP had paid a $50 million fine and pled guilty to a felony in a refinery explosion. An investigation into the incident concluded that a warning system was not working and that BP sidestepped its own internal regulations for operating the tower. Moreover, BP has a prior felony conviction for improperly disposing of hazardous waste.

Considering that these fines amount to less than one tenth of 1 percent of the billions in profit that BP made from committing these crimes, it is no wonder the fines have not been a deterrent to further reckless behavior.

Violations at even bigger site

A whistleblower from within BP revealed that the company has had serious violations at an even larger oil platform, BP Atlantis, located 200 miles south of New Orleans.

Last May, Mike Sawyer, an engineer with Apex Safety Consultants, looked at documents provided by the whistleblower, who has remained anonymous for fear of reprisals. Sawyer said the safety shutdown logic drawings on Atlantis — a complex computerized system that, during emergencies, is supposed to send a signal to automatically shut down the flow of oil — were listed as "requiring update." BP had refused to hand over the internal documents because it could potentially cost them millions of dollars to provide these safety features.

The explosion that caused the current crisis was exacerbated, preliminary reports suggest, by the failure of a blowout preventer, like the one cited above, that should have shut off the flow of oil on the drilling rig; and the lack of a backup safety measure, known as a remote control acoustic shutoff switch, to operate the blowout preventer. In other words, BP's mad search for profits may well have led to the current catastrophe in the Gulf.

Despite the revelations, federal authorities have allowed BP operations at its Atlantis site to continue.

Ironically, only two weeks ago President Barack Obama, in a bid to placate pro-business forces, opened up even larger areas in the Gulf of Mexico to offshore drilling. The administration has since halted approval of any new sites until the current crisis is "resolved." But no one can seriously question the obvious fact that the long-term complicity of the U.S. capitalist government with the oil companies, no matter who was president, helped lay the groundwork for the present disaster. □

From Dish, Texas, to Dimock, Pa.

Hydraulic fracking spells disaster

By Betsey Piette

Despite industry claims that the rapidly expanding practice of hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas from deep underground shale layers is "perfectly safe," on April 15 the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection fined Houston-based Cabot Oil and Gas $240,000 for causing the contamination of 14 residential water wells in Dimock Township, Pa.

The company was also ordered to plug three gas wells it was operating in the town, which sits atop the Marcellus Shale formation, and was banned from drilling in the area. One water well in Dimock exploded last year, and DEP inspectors witnessed gas bubbling up at the base of eight other wells in March. Despite the ruling, Cabot has plans to drill 100 new wells in Dimock this year.

Independent newsroom ProPublica has reported on 50 similar cases across Pennsylvania, including reports of fish kills, water and air pollution, fires, out-of-control flaring, human illnesses and animal deaths.

The concern over the safety of hydraulic fracturing has prompted calls for a moratorium on drilling in Pennsylvania. In the process, often referred to as fracking, 2 to 9 millions of gallons of water, mixed with sand and up to 250 chemicals, are pushed into underground shale layers to release natural gas.

In January the Pennsylvania state Legislature opened up 32,000 additional acres of state forest land to be leased for drilling. As a result, 692,000 acres of the 2.1 million acres of state forest land are now open for gas wells. During a recent push to expand the practice into the Delaware River basin, the Philadelphia City Council was pressured to pass a resolution on March 25 calling for an environmental impact statement before any new permits are issued.

Fracking has been in use for a number of years throughout the U.S., particularly in the Southwest. Five natural gas sites border the town of Dish, Texas, in a quarter-mile complex. In nearby Fort Worth, Texas, 1,400 wells have been drilled in urban areas, many near schools and residential centers.

Speaking at a meeting at Temple University's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering on April 16, Dish Mayor Calvin Tillman described how carcinogenic air pollution from natural gas drilling has damaged the quality of life in his town of 180 residents. The town sits atop the Barnett Shale, a geological formation similar to the Marcellus Shale.

Using his own money, Tillman has been traveling to Pennsylvania and New York to warn about the dangers of the gas boom. In his small town, trees are dying on a 30-acre farm that adjoins a labyrinth of small underground pipelines used to transport fuel from the fracking wells to outside markets. Horses have also fallen ill. Residents report problems with frequent nausea, severe headaches, breathing difficulties, chronic eye irritation, allergies, throat irritations and even brain disorders.

When Texas state inspectors, who are usually linked to the drilling companies, reported they could not find any problem with the wells, Dish town officials hired an environmental firm to collect one-day air samples near the compressors. Their study found high levels of 15 chemicals, including benzene, a known carcinogen. As a result the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality conducted air studies at 94 sites in the region. They found two sites with very high levels of benzene and 19 others with levels that raised concern.

In April, blood and urine testing of 28 adult Dish residents revealed that half the residents had slightly elevated levels of benzene and other contaminants. Four residents tested positive for benzene, including Tillman. Tillman noted that no testing was done on children, pregnant women or the elderly — groups likely to be most susceptible to the contaminants. Tillman's water also tested positive for traces of styrene, ethyl benzene and xylene.

Growing concern over the danger of fracking has led to a push for legislation in Pennsylvania that would require drillers to disclose chemical ingredients in hydraulic fracturing fluids. Other proposed legislation calls for a moratorium on drilling until environmental impact studies can be performed. Both bills have yet to be passed and face mounting opposition from the natural gas industry.

Nationally, the oil and gas industry won exemption from major provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act and other federal environmental laws with the passage of the 2005 Energy Bill. The bill's "Halliburton loophole" protected the company from having to reveal the composition of their fracturing fluid, despite the fact that the list of hazardous substances compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund — the program established to address abandoned hazardous waste sites — includes toxic profiles on benzene, styrene, toluene and other agents known to be in the mix. Efforts are also underway to challenge this legislation.

The EPA announced it will spend $4.4 million to start a study on the impact of fracturing in October, but Dr. Michel Boufadel, director of the Environmental Hydrology and Hydraulics Laboratory at Temple University College of Engineering, expressed concerns that the EPA's study does not go far enough.

Speaking at the April 16 meeting, Boufadel noted that very few scientific studies on fracking have been conducted by researchers not connected to the drilling industry. He also pointed out that most studies assume that any leak of water contaminated by fracturing fluids would spread horizontally from a holding tank and be detected by ground level monitors.

Boufadel explained that the 250 chemicals contained in the fracturing fluid create "gooey, high density water" — a gel that suspends the sand particles needed to work into cracks in the shale layers. The result is "radioactive water six times more saline than sea water and containing known carcinogens."

"If you don't account for this heavy density you would expect water to move outward, but the reality is that it moves down," Boufadel stressed. "If you only use existing traditional models of monitoring wells at ground level, you won't detect contamination until it's too late." □

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May Day Union Square

‘Legalization & jobs for all workers!’

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

May Day at Union Square was a stunning sight as thousands poured into the park to send a resounding message of repudiation against the recently passed SB1071 law in Arizona. They demanded legalization for the undocumented as well as jobs, housing, education and social services for all.

Union Square has been the site of previous May Day rallies. This year a program of speakers and revolutionary rappers was followed by a two-mile march downtown to Federal Plaza. Their ranks grew along the way as they chanted “Boycott Arizona!” and “Si se puede!” (Yes, we can!).

WW PHOTOS: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

People of all nationalities who crowded the sidewalks of lower Broadway were clearly friendly to the march. As they read the signs and heard the chants, some joined in while others gave peace signs and thumbs up.

When the last of the huge crowd was finally able to squeeze into Federal Plaza for a second rally, it was possible to put a number on the demonstration: 25,000 angry but hopeful people had come out to demand legalization for all undocumented workers and their families and to denounce the bill for “immigration reform” being readied by Sen. Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat.

This bill would make “securing the border” its top priority and would force all workers to carry a biometric identity card to prove their citizenship status to their bosses.

Eight out of every 10 marchers appeared to represent Latin American and Caribbean communities, but there were also significant contingents of Filipinos, South Asians, Africans and Pacific islanders.

In addition, African Americans, who were well represented among the speakers, emphasized the great importance of Black-Brown unity against racism and discrimination.

This was the fifth May Day action to be called by the May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, which formed in New York after the tremendous movement of immigrant workers across the country began in the spring of 2006. Demonstrations and what amounted to a general strike on May 1, 2006, had tied up whole cities, especially in the West and Southwest, in opposition to the reactionary Sensenbrenner bill.

Several speakers at this year’s May Day demonstration represented workers in large unions — Charles Jenkins of the Transport Workers, Clarence Thomas of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and Mike Gimbel of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Brenda Stokely of the Million Worker March Movement co-chaired the rally. They all challenged the labor movement as a whole to take a clear stand supporting immigrant rights.

May 1 organizer Teresa Gutierrez (right), above top. Charles Jenkins of the Transport Workers, above. Rebel Diaz

Bilingual Hip-hop artists rouse the crowd

At the Union Square rally several well-known Hip-hop artists, including Rebel Diaz, rapped in defiance of repressive authority. Their cultural performances in English and Spanish, interspersed with a broad collection of speakers, added both emotion and revolutionary politics to the program.

Large contingents came from the Bronx, Queens and Washington Heights in upper Manhattan. Day laborers, whose right to work is under serious threat, came in buses and vans from Long Island and New Jersey. Organizations that mobilized included Vamos Unidos, Desis Rising Up and Moving, Committee to Support the Struggle of the Haitian People, Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment and several Ecuadorean groups. A spirited Puerto Rican and Honduran delegation moved the crowd.

Vicky Palaez, a popular columnist from El Diario/La Prensa, addressed the crowd amid many cheers. A young Mexican girl bravely spoke of how her father had been torn away from his family.

Commenting on arrests that happened that very day in Jackson Heights, Queens, May 1 Coalition spokesperson Teresa Gutierrez said: “This shows that it is not just enough to repudiate the Arizona legislation. Mayor Bloomberg has even done that at the same time that the police carry out terror against day laborers and street vendors in New York. This is why the May Day marches around the country were so important, as it shows the movement is not going away but is building.”

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Immigrant rights activist Isabel Garcia in Tucson, Ariz., spoke to the second rally by telephone. Cheers went up as she reported that thousands had demonstrated there, too, despite the terror tactics of Homeland Security and its immigration arm, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The protest also stressed that the overall economic crisis now devastating the working class is what is driving right-wing politicians and government repression. Many speakers pointed out how the bosses and their political lackeys are fueling a hate campaign in order to prevent workers from uniting and fighting for jobs, housing, health care and education.

Larry Holmes of the Bail Out the People Movement, which helped build the May Day protest, spoke about doing everything possible to respond to the racist attack in Arizona, including exploring an action on June 19, an important date in the struggle against slavery known also as “Juneteenth.” Holmes also urged those present to be in Washington on May 8 for a national march for jobs.

Bernadette Ellorin of the Filipino organization BAYAN-USA and a co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition, closed the Federal Plaza rally by saying that “the solution for the anti-immigrant, anti-worker climate is for all of us to build the broadest anti-imperialist working class movement in the very belly of the beast.”

Workers World Party members helped out in many aspects of the organizing for the May 1 protest and took responsibility for tasks on the day.

Email: dgriswold@workers.org

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

ON ARIZONA

Sports world speaks out

The passage of the extremely racist anti-immigrant bill in Arizona has evoked anger and outrage in the streets throughout the U.S. and the world. A national and international boycott of Arizona tourism will gain steam as long as Senate Bill 1070 is not repealed before it goes into effect some time in early August.

This mass anger is impacting upon professional sports. There have been growing protests at stadiums where the Major League Baseball team Arizona Diamondbacks play. The team’s owners financially backed Republican legislators who supported and pushed through the bill.

A number of baseball players whose origins are Latin American countries have also publicly condemned the racist law. They have been joined by the MLB Players Association. The union is threatening to boycott the 2011 All-Star game in Phoenix if the law is not overturned.

Anger over the Arizona law has also spilled over into the professional basketball arena. On April 28, in a segment of “Ask Charles” during TNT’s popular “Inside the NBA” show, Mexican-American comedian George Lopez made a surprise visit on the set to ask National Basketball Association Hall of Famer and analyst, Charles Barkley, a question.

Protest against Arizona Diamondbacks team in Chicago, April 29.

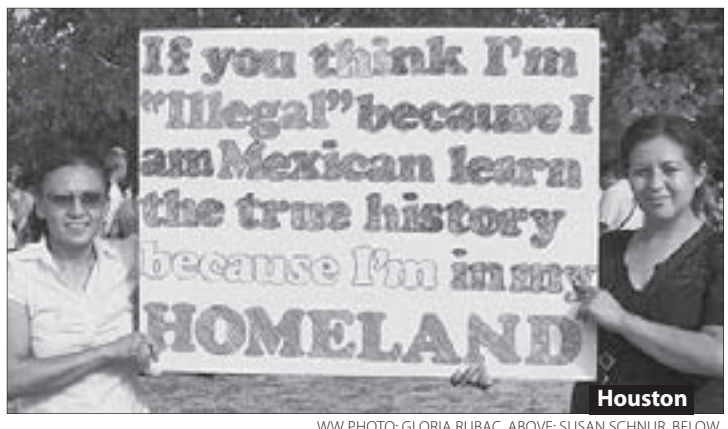
The question that Lopez asked Barkley, who is African-American and a former Phoenix Suns player, was if he had learned to speak Spanish with the program Lopez had sent to him. When Barkley answered that he had not, Lopez responded kiddingly that Barkley had better not learn too much Spanish if he planned to go to Arizona.

Barkley then spontaneously answered that he and Lopez were going to Arizona together to show how much they didn’t appreciate the anti-immigrant bill. Then Barkley denounced the archracist Arizona sheriff, Joe Arpaio, and Gov. Jan Brewer.

— Monica Moorehead

MAY DAY PROTESTS IN U.S. D

The following are eyewitness reports from some of the cities where May Day activities were held. Other protests took place in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Minneapolis, Trenton, N.J., and elsewhere.



Houston

Cleveland

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC, ABOVE; SUSAN SCHNUR, BELOW

Chelsea, MA

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Ten thousand immigrants and their supporters took to **Houston** streets on May 1 to demand legalization, immigration reform and an end to the racist Arizona law. Children and youth; their parents and grandparents; whole families with two or three generations from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and all over Latin America marched, danced, chanted and sang at a massive rally at Burnet Bayland Park in the heart of the immigrant community.

The surge of people marched for well over an hour. Hundreds if not thousands of cheering people lined the streets; many joined the march.

Many whites and African Americans representing dozens of progressive organizations participated, with a large number from the lesbian, gay, bi and trans communities. Only one politician, African-American Congressperson Al Green, marched with the crowd and addressed the rally. Organizers agreed that the recent Arizona law that will racially profile people was the impetus that compelled many to attend this year's march. It was the largest in Houston since the historic 2006 immigrant rights May Day march.

A multinational mass march and rally took place in southwest **Detroit** on May Day to demand legalization and a public jobs program and to protest the apartheid Arizona law. As marchers gathered and took to the streets in the heart of Detroit's Latino/a community, numerous large banners and placards declaring "Overturn Arizona apartheid: Jobs not racism" were seen for blocks.

A multinational youth contingent held the lead banner for the entire miles-long march route. Many passersby joined the march and also the final rally in Clark Park where speakers such as Baldemar Velasquez of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee spoke. The demonstration was sponsored by Latinos Unidos of Detroit and supported by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition; Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice; Detroit Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST); FLOC, the Detroit Green Party; and Workers World Party, among other organizations.

In **Ann Arbor, Mich.**, 1,000 people demonstrated for immigrant rights and against the Arizona law during President Barack Obama's speech at the University of Michigan commencement.

On the State House lawn in **Providence, R.I.**, working people affected by the economic crisis gathered to protest the economic, social and political attacks on poverty-stricken communities and to express unity of the Black community, unemployed workers, immigrants and youth.

Hundreds of people attended a rally where Native-American, African-American and Latino/a cultural presentations kept people engaged among an array of speakers who hammered out a message of the need for a unified struggle in Rhode Island. People demanded that lawmakers put people to work, meet human needs and end racial profiling against Black, Muslim and immigrant communities.

Joseph P. Buchanan, a Black part-time worker, said, "We stand in solidarity with the brave people of Arizona, and we want people to know that the way to end this abuse is by making sure we have good jobs, racial justice, and good education and social programs that our families deserve."

Mayra Paulino spoke about the stress now being put on undocumented women and how the danger of the Arizona-type laws will cause domestic violence against undocumented women to go unreported due to the fear of arrest, imprisonment and deportation.

The event was sponsored by a number of organizations, including Comite de Immigration en Accion, R.I. Unemployed Council, Fueza Laboral/Power of Workers, S.O.S. (Save Our Schools), DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), R.I. Peoples Assembly, Providence Youth & Student Movement, and others.

Close to 300 activists in **Baltimore** participated in a May Day event organized by United Workers to highlight the struggle of low-wage workers in the Inner Harbor tourist, shopping and restaurant area. The activists conducted street theater in three working-class neighborhoods and then converged downtown in front of City Hall, before marching through the Inner Harbor District to a final rally.

The Bail Out the People Movement participated with placards condemning the Arizona apartheid law and announcing the May 8 jobs action in Washington, D.C. About 100 participants signed a pledge to boycott Arizona until the anti-immigrant apartheid law is overturned.

In **Cleveland**, about 100 people came to a demonstration called by the Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network, which originally fought against the repression of Middle Eastern immigrants in Cleveland following 9/11. A large contingent of students from John Carroll University attended.

Rally speeches included one by Maria, a young woman who spoke of how, at age 17, she has been forced to raise a number of small children because their parents have been deported and they have nowhere else to turn. Susan Schnur, a long-time bus driver, made spirited remarks about the struggle for jobs and the current crisis in transit. Caleb Maupin from FIST also spoke.

Over 200 people rallied at a park in the center of **Painesville, Ohio**, where a large number of ICE raids have taken place.

Wearing white shirts and carrying signs declaring "We are human" and "Workers are not criminals," an estimated 7,000 people filled the street in front of the state Capitol in **Atlanta** to demand an end to raids and deportations, the separation of families, and the implementation of

Baltimore

PHOTO: UNITED WORKERS

Providence, R.I.

PHOTO LISA REELS, ABOVE, BELOW DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

New York

One million on May Day demand:

Continued from page 1

crowd chanting and energized.

The people of Tucson and throughout Arizona support the Boycott Arizona movement. As the names of cities and organizations that expressed their solidarity with the struggle in Arizona were read, the crowd cheered. The ICE raids and apartheid-like bills did not terrorize the population into submission, but rather evoked outrage and created a movement that continues to grow. May Day in Tucson was truly celebrated by the workers and the oppressed.

Paul Teitelbaum from the Tucson May 1 Coalition told the Associated Press, "[We want] an end to the militarization of the border. We want that money spent on people's needs, not on troops to the border." (May 1)

The **Phoenix** Metro News reported that 7,000 rallied at the Arizona state capitol, while Internet sources say 10,000 took part in Phoenix's May Day protest.

Hundreds of thousands of protestors came out strong in **Los Angeles** on May Day. The march included multinational Latino/a immigrant participants and non-immigrant organizations of people who felt compelled to protest the racist, anti-immigrant SB 1070. Many of the signs attacked the Arizona bill.

This year marked the first time since 2006 that there was one united march in Los Angeles.

A large portion of the signs reflected anger at attempts to further criminalize immigrant workers: "SB 1070 = Schumer plan"; "Legalization now"; "Obama, Escucha: Schumer plan = Criminalization"; "No reform — No reelection."

The Southern California Immigration Coalition contingent, wearing red shirts and carrying red, Mexican and Honduran flags and flags from other Latin American countries, represented one of the largest groups in the united protest. SCIC includes over 40 organizations; some of the major ones are Union del Barrio, BAYAN-USA, Service Employees Local 721 Latino Caucus, Latino Congresso and the International Action Center/Bail Out the People

DENOUNCE ARIZONA RACISM

PHOTO: JORGE L.

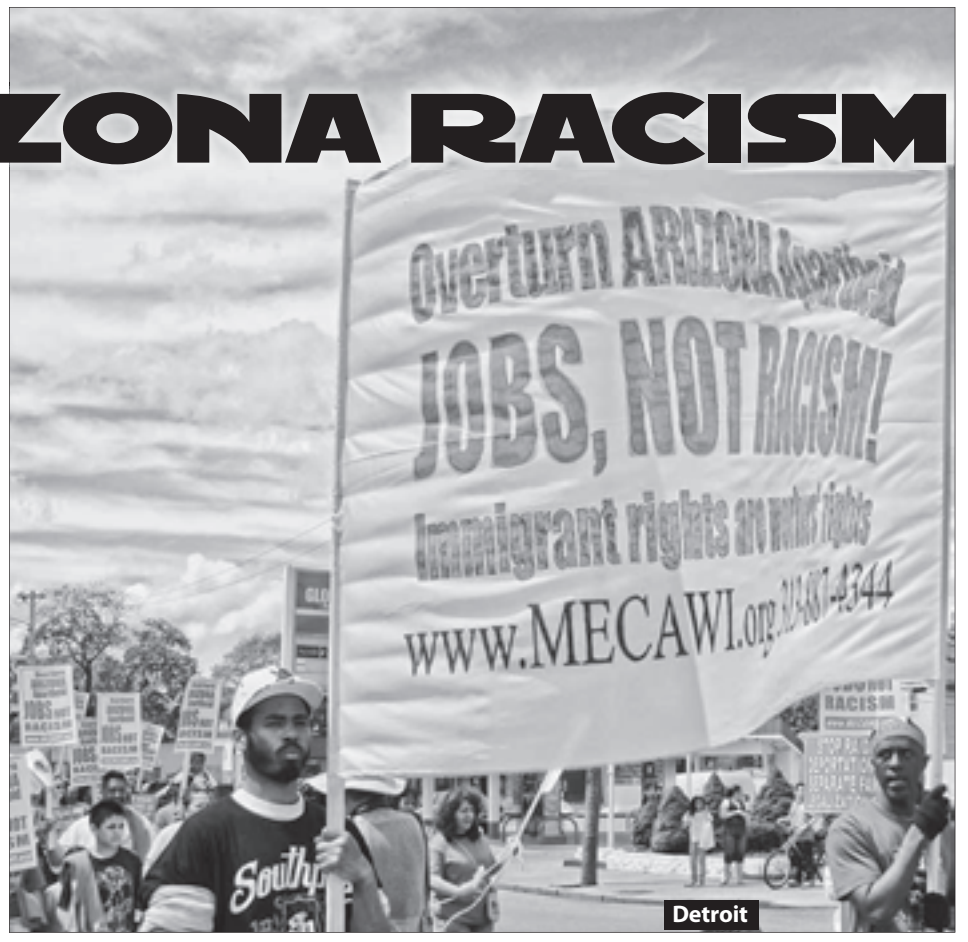
287(g) agreements.

Everywhere there were homemade banners and signs denouncing Arizona's apartheid law SB 1070 and calling for comprehensive and fair changes in U.S. immigration policies. The largely Spanish-speaking crowd marched for two miles, looping around the area that included the center of Atlanta's historic African-American neighborhood. Black barbers and restaurant workers came out to cheer the marchers.

One of the most enthusiastic contingents was that of the sorority sisters and friends of Jessica Colotl, a Kennesaw State University senior of Mexican heritage who was arrested following a minor traffic incident on campus. She was immediately transferred to the women's detention center in Gadsden, Ala., and is now awaiting deportation. A national campaign is being launched to stop this travesty of justice. The May Day demonstration was initiated by the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights and endorsed by dozens of organizations.

More than 200 people marched through the streets of **Buffalo, N.Y.**, demanding immigrant rights. The protest focused on Arizona's racist, anti-immigrant law and the need for solidarity and fightback.

The strength of youth and student leadership was visible throughout the event. The march was very diverse: Black, Latino/a, Native, white, Yemeni, Turkish, South Asian, Slovenian, Caribbean, Sri Lankan, among other nationalities. Ages ranged from retired workers to toddlers in strollers.



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

After gathering on Main Street, demonstrators marched two miles east through an impoverished, working-class Black community. The marchers and their message were applauded and cheered by residents from their front lawns. Those who drove past honked, extended clenched fist salutes, gave thumbs-up approval and flashed the V sign for peace and victory.

A delegation of activists drove from Syracuse to take part in the Buffalo rally. LGBT leader and author Leslie Feinberg, who helped organize the Syracuse participation, reminded those at the rally that in the 1850s Central and Western New York were united as abolitionist strongholds against the Fugitive Slave Act, much as today's youth are responding to a similarly racist law in Arizona.

The May Day March in **Seattle** was the largest since 2006. Over 5,000 people came out to fight back against racist SB 1070. Most of the marchers were Latino/a workers who were joined by workers of many other nationalities and union members. They chanted "Boycott Arizona!" The march travelled almost three miles through the International District (Asian) community through downtown to Seattle Center. A small group of ultra-racists across from Seattle Center was driven off by the angry crowd.

Nine May Day marches or rallies were held in Washington State, including one of 3,000 in **Yakima**.

Contributors to this round-up are Sharon Danann, Ellie Dorritie, Mary Kay Harris, Dianne Mathiowetz, Caleb T. Maupin, Jim McMahan, Frank Neisser, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Andre Powell and Gloria Rubac.

PHOTO: ERIC JONES

Stop Arizona apartheid law

Movement.

Two of the rally emcees were Ron Gochez of Union del Barrio and Celina Benitez of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. Both are steering committee members of SCIC. They made comments and led chants that made it clear that any legislation calling for criminalization was not acceptable.

John Parker from IAC/BOPM said at the main rally, "Solidarity is our most powerful weapon, and we will not let them disarm us with division, whether it be a health care bill that leaves out 14 million immigrants or a Schumer plan that creates criminalized, second-class Bracero workers. We say no to criminalization — legalization now!"

Historic Chicano Park in **San Diego** was the assembly site for the May Day rally, march and an angry confrontation with anti-immigrant Minutemen at the downtown federal building. Hosted by Unión del Barrio, over 2,000 people participated.

Among the rally speakers was Gloria Verdieu of the Free Mumia Coalition and the San Diego International Action Center. In a dramatic show of unity with the Latino/a community, Verdieu took the stage with a delegation of African-American community members and other activists. She told the crowd, "May Day must be a mobilization that calls for a major campaign to build Black and Brown unity as an anchor for the unity of people of color and all workers struggling for human rights and global justice. ... All workers in the U.S. — especially those who don't need to fear the immigration Gestapo — must show the strongest solidarity. ... We must win legalization for all workers in the U.S. and reinforce the unity and solidarity among all workers."

Other participants in the day's events included the Aztec Drummers and Dancers, BAYAN USA, the Border Angels, the Guerrero Azteca Peace Project, the United African American Ministerial Council, Friends of Cuba, Veterans for Peace and the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice.

Bay Area joins protests

In the **San Francisco** Mission District thousands of immigrant workers, family members, community organizations and their supporters spilled out into the streets to join the national protest for immigrant rights. The marchers, who stretched for over five city blocks, chanted, yelled, sang and beat drums all the way to the Civic Center.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

"We are people! We are not illegal, no!" and other chants echoed from the protesters and the crowds that gathered to cheer and sing alongside the march. A sea of humanity representing the multitude of immigrants came together to state unequivocally, "There are no borders in the workers' struggle."

The march was led by immigrant workers from the AFL-CIO State Labor Council, the Service Employees union, the Transport Workers union, the hotel workers union UNITE HERE, and other labor organizations. A truck held the many national flags of the Americas and carried Indigenous drummers.

At a rally held in the Civic Center, speakers condemned the recent legislation passed in Arizona. The May 1 protest was organized by the San Francisco May Day 2010 Coalition.

Judy Greenspan, John Parker, Paul Teitelbaum and Gloria Verdieu contributed to this report.

MAY DAY

Mass rebuff to Arizona law and ICE

By Fred Goldstein

Four years ago on May Day millions of immigrants and their supporters forced the capitalist government to back away from the vicious, anti-immigrant Sensenbrenner bill.

This May Day more than 1 million immigrants and supporters demonstrating in more than 100 cities sent a powerful message to anti-immigrant racist forces in Arizona to drop their police-state, apartheid law that legalizes racial profiling.

Fused with the protests against the Arizona law were demands to end raids, deportations and family separations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The demonstrations called for legalization, an end to criminalization of all undocumented immigrants, and for justice and equality across the board.

The massive outpouring of militant immigrants dwarfed the previous turnouts by racist bands of Tea Party riffraff, who have been made to look like an almighty juggernaut by the big-business-owned media since they staged town hall "rebellions" when the health care bill was up for debate.

The May Day showing was a closer reflection of the true potential relationship of forces between the workers and the oppressed masses on the one hand and the ultra-right on the other — once the people mobilize. The rabid anti-immigrant forces that flocked to rallies for Sarah Palin on her Tea Party tour were nowhere in sight on May Day — and for good reason. May Day was truly a big step forward on the road to fighting the right.

Arizona part of a trend

The Arizona law is about stoking racism, scapegoating immigrants, dividing the working class and making it easier for the bosses to get through the economic crisis of joblessness without a workers' rebellion. But the law, although extreme, is not an isolated event.

ICE raids and the collaboration between the federal government and close to 70 police departments across the country continue. The rhetoric out of Washington, particularly regarding the bill being drafted by Sen. Charles Schumer of New York, is about "border security," a draconian "path" to citizenship of paying fines, showing proficiency in English, going to the "back of the line," guest worker programs, etc. These punitive so-called "immigration reform" measures would further persecute and officially stigmatize undocumented workers.

In addition, the talk of a biometric identity card is a potential threat to all workers. Right now there is a Homeland Security background check on all port workers in the country. Many have lost their jobs after the discovery of minor infractions.

The biometric identity card would give all bosses a weapon against all workers. The threat is especially serious for Black and Latino/a workers. They wind up with disproportionately high incidences of incarceration because of a high unemployment rate and because they are racially profiled to begin with. It is quite understandable why, among the many slogans chanted at the demonstrations, "Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!" (Obama, listen, we are in the struggle!) was often heard.

The Obama administration has been distant and passive in the face of this patently unconstitutional challenge to the rights of Latino/as and to the jurisdiction of the administration itself. Right-wing legislators in Texas, Utah, Colorado and elsewhere are threatening to follow suit on the Arizona law.

So far Washington has left it up to local forces to resist by legal means this police-state measure, which gives cops the right to ask for the papers of anyone they have a "reasonable suspicion" could be undocumented. The mayor of Phoenix, a cop from Pima County, the American Civil Liberties Union and other legal organizations have mounted challenges to the law.

Meanwhile, ICE and the Maricopa County cops under the fascist-minded Sheriff Joe Arpaio continue to carry out raids and arbitrary checks, despite a Homeland Security ruling taking the right to enforce immigration policy away from Arpaio.

This vacillation in Washington not only emboldens the right-wing, anti-immigrant camp in its repression, it strengthens the same racist forces that want to bring the Obama administration down.

While fascist Minutemen types and other ultra-rightists have always been pushing an assault on undocumented workers, the ruling class as a whole and the capitalist government took a more moderate position during the economic boom.

Capitalists need undocumented workers

The bosses did not complain when undocumented workers came across the border to grow their food, build houses and office buildings for the real estate boom, become roofers, dry wall workers, painters, gardeners and landscapers, work in the slaughterhouses, clean homes, take care of children and so on.

The construction companies, real estate developers, hotel industry, meatpackers and other capitalists made billions in profit exploiting undocumented workers, who had little representation and were completely vulnerable.

But once the housing bubble burst, the economic crisis widened and the employers could no longer make an easy profit off the millions of undocumented workers, the ruling class turned toward scapegoating. As unemployment rose in the U.S. from 4 percent to 10 percent, the attitude of the ruling class and the government became harsher.

This was part of a carefully calculated government policy. During the economic boom the capitalists needed around 400,000 low-wage immigrant workers a year. Yet the law allowed only 5,000 low-wage workers a year to enter the country legally. This was insurance that there would be a vast reservoir of undocumented workers to compete for low-wage jobs. It also ensured that, during a downturn, there would be an undocumented population to scapegoat for the unemployment crisis.

NAFTA, agribusiness and immigration

This is precisely what has happened in Arizona. Unemployment has gone officially from more than 4 percent to 9.6 percent in the two years of the crisis. Where there were 150,000 unemployed in Arizona, the number has gone up to more than 300,000. And this is an understatement because tens of thousands of undocumented workers are no longer counted as part of the work force. If they apply for benefits, state workers are required to report them to ICE.

It is difficult to understand why people would leave their families and risk hardship and death crossing the desert to get to the U.S. unless you know that the NAFTA treaty, passed in 1994, opened up Mexico to U.S. agribusiness, destroying a large part of Mexico's domestic agriculture and leaving millions landless and jobless. The invasion of U.S. corporations forced millions of immigrants to come here in order to feed themselves and their families.

It was a corporate scheme — heads the workers lose, tails the bosses win. And it was consciously constructed.

This is the background to the campaign of intimidation and division being waged against undocumented workers. The only solution can come from the working class and it involves solidarity, both inside the U.S. and between all U.S. workers and Mexican workers. Workers and peasants in Mexico will be forced to come here for survival as long as U.S. corporate imperialism is in Mexico and other oppressed countries.

It is too soon to tell what the magnificent May Day 2010 mobilizations will ultimately accomplish. But they have already given pause to the ruling class and its plans to make immigrants the scapegoats of the economic crisis. This gives an opening to increase the solidarity of all workers and to raise the slogan that there are no borders in the workers' struggle. □

Labor march hits Wall Street

The New York City Central Labor Council, in conjunction with the National People's Action, held a march on Wall Street April 29. After some speeches from labor leaders, including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, the march took off down Broadway to the statue of the Charging Bull, south of Wall Street.

Trumka's speech focused on the AFL-CIO's demand for 11 million new jobs at good wages. He demanded Wall Street stop fighting reforms, stop speculating and invest, and pay its "fair share of the cost of creating the jobs you destroyed."

Earlier the NPA occupied the lobbies of JPMorgan Chase and Wachovia to demand these banks "invest in America."

Between 6,000 and 8,000 people participated in the march. A number of unions, especially from the building trades and American Federation of Teachers, had significant delegations. A number of African-American community groups, some carrying NPA placards, also marched.

— Report and photo by G. Dunkel

'Moratorium on all foreclosures'

Ohio homeowner, supporters fight eviction

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Stony Ridge, Ohio

Supporters are urgently needed at Keith Sadler's home in Stony Ridge, Ohio, just outside of Toledo. On May 2 Sadler and five supporters barricaded themselves inside the home to protest the bank's foreclosure and eviction of Sadler from his home of 20 years.

"It's been home for me, my daughter and nephews for periods of time, my nine cats, and this was my grandson's first home after he was born," Sadler told members of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs, who traveled from Detroit May 2 to a news conference and rally at Sadler's home.

Also attending the press conference were members of the United Auto Workers, the Toledo Foreclosure Defense League, Take Back the Land, Detroit Green Party and the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice.

A longtime UAW member in various manufacturing plants, Sadler was unable to work after a repetitive strain injury became acute in July 2008. After being out of work for some time due to his injury and two surgeries, Sadler's income decreased, and it became a severe challenge

Continued on next page

The pope, pedophilia & class struggle

By Sara Flounders

The first article covered how the sweeping pedophilia revelations now rocking the Catholic Church came from parishioners refusing to be silenced by the church hierarchy.

How extensive are the sex abuse crimes committed against youth? Is the church hierarchy guilty of ignoring the problem — meaning criminal negligence? Or are they guilty of the much more serious crime of criminal complicity by refusing to take action even when crimes were brought to their direct attention?

A memo personally signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, when he headed the powerful Vatican office where all charges of abuse were centralized was exposed this April and has aroused a new outcry. Ratzinger overrode and stopped any action against the predator priest, the Rev. Lawrence C. Murphy.

Murphy was accused of sexually abusing more than 200 boys at a Milwaukee school for the deaf, despite appeals for his expulsion even from his bishop. For decades the former students had used sign language and written affidavits in meetings with bishops and secular officials to demand that Father Murphy be charged and prosecuted.

At the same time, the story broke in Italy that 67 former pupils of another school for the deaf in Verona had accused 24 priests, brothers and religious laymen of sexually abusing them from the age of 7 years.

In Germany, more than 250 suppressed cases of abuse have surfaced in the last two months, including in districts directly overseen by Pope Benedict when he had been the bishop.

International publicity surrounding the Boston suit over sexual abuse of children and the multimillion-dollar settlement gave many other victims of abuse the courage to also speak out and seek justice. More than 4,000 priests have been accused of molesting minors in the U.S. since 1950 and the Catholic Church here has paid out more than $2 billion in settlements to victims of abuse. In 2007 the Los Angeles Archdiocese announced a $600-million settlement to about 500 plaintiffs. Six dioceses have been forced into bankruptcy and many dioceses have been forced to sell substantial church assets to pay settlements.

Many of these cases are detailed by an organization called SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. SNAP describes itself as the oldest and largest support group for clergy abuse victims.

Not only children have been the victims of abuse. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch of Jan. 4, 2003, a national survey conducted by researchers at St. Louis University was paid for, in part, by several orders of Catholic nuns. It estimated that a "minimum" of 34,000 Catholic nuns, or about 40 percent of all nuns in the U.S., have suffered some form of sexual trauma.

It is important to take note that overwhelmingly the testimony, lawsuits, inquiries and exposés of sexual abuse have come from within the Catholic Church itself, from survivors of abuse. Many other ordinary, but outraged, Catholics have joined in demanding an accounting from a privileged, clerical hierarchy bent on protecting their position, authority and wealth and not on protecting children.

Throughout Europe there is a growing call to criminally prosecute Pope Benedict at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the grounds that protecting the church, not its victims, is a criminal offense. Geoffrey Robertson, U.N. Justice Council member and president of the Special Court in Sierra Leone, says he believes it is time to challenge the pope's immunity.

In an article in the London Guardian of April 2 headlined, "Put the pope in the dock," Robertson wrote: "Legal immunity cannot hold. The Vatican should feel the full weight of international law. Pedophilia is a crime against humanity. The anomalous claim of the Vatican to be a state — and of the pope to be a head of state and hence immune from legal action — cannot stand up to scrutiny."

PART 2

Of course, it is important to remember that the International Criminal Court has to date brought charges only against four African countries that are targeted by imperialism.

U.S. war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Israeli crimes against Palestinian and Lebanese civilians have been ignored by the ICC. A bulwark of U.S. imperialism on a global scale, it is unlikely that the Vatican will face charges any time soon.

War on global movement for justice

What role does the Vatican play in class society that is of particular value to U.S. imperialism?

While absolving, covering up and transferring thousands of priests who were guilty of child abuse, Pope Benedict XVI used his position for 25 years as head of the most powerful church institution, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to remove from parishes, schools and all positions of authority thousands of priests, bishops and religious persons who were in any way progressive or concerned with advocating for the rights and dignity of poor and oppressed people.

Dissident Catholic theologians, teachers, writers and intellectuals were prevented from writing, publishing and teaching in church institutions. Bishops who attempted to use their authority for social change were investigated for loyalty and forced to resign. They were replaced by the most politically reactionary clergy who were concerned mainly with preserving religious authority and dogma.

This was a right-wing effort to stamp out a progressive religious current known as "liberation theology," which sought to align the church with the liberation movements and anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles sweeping Africa, Asia and Latin America and the civil rights movement in the U.S.

Priests such as Father Camilo Torres in Colombia, who wrote, spoke and organized around the effort to unite revolutionary Marxism and Catholicism, were considered a direct threat to capitalist exploitation. Father Torres joined the armed struggle against the U.S.-supported dictatorship and died in combat.

Activist nuns who led the sanctuary movement to provide assistance and safe transit to Salvadoran immigrants fleeing death squads were targeted. So were Philip and Tom Berrigan, priests who continually risked arrest and served jail time with a militant Catholic grouping opposed to the Vietnam War.

Liberation theologians, such as the charismatic Leonardo Boff of Brazil, were prohibited by the Church from speaking or writing. Priests who sought to serve the poor, like Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, were expelled from their religious order and forced to resign for the crime of "glorification of class struggle." Bishop Samuel Ruiz of Chiapas, Mexico, was ordered to refrain from "Marxist interpretations."

It was a witch hunt and a purge that targeted anti-racist and social justice activists. Yet the reactionary breakaway Bishop Richard Williamson, who publicly denied the Holocaust, was welcomed back into the church.

Faced with growing opposition on every level, this powerful institution that has for centuries protected the property and privilege of the Western ruling classes increasingly chose to elevate the most fanatically reactionary forces to do battle with those urging change, opening, equality and attention to the needs of the poor and oppressed.

Under Pope John Paul II and then Pope Benedict XVI, the Catholic Church was a staunch ally of U.S. imperialism opposing socialist construction in Eastern Europe. In turn the powerful U.S. media played an active role in promoting and giving favorable coverage to the Church while demonizing Muslims and other religions of oppressed people.

In 2006 Pope Benedict gave Catholic support to the anti-Muslim propaganda that Washington had consciously promoted in order to justify war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a major papal address he quoted a 14th-century Byzantine emperor who said that the Prophet Muhammad had brought the world only "evil and inhuman things."

The alliance with U.S. imperialism forced the Catholic Church to revive the most reactionary excesses of its own dark past. Members of groupings tied to death squads and military dictatorship throughout Latin America and to fascism and extreme reaction in Europe, such as the secretive Opus Dei and Legionaries of Christ, were promoted to top offices in the Vatican and around the world.

Two fascist clerics, Josemaría Escrivá, who sided with Hitler during World War II and organized fascist gangs to hunt down communists and revolutionary trade unionists in Franco's Spain, and Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac of Croatia, who helped establish extermination camps for Jews, Serbs and Roma people, were proposed for sainthood.

It is not a contradiction that priests who abused children were protected and hidden while those religious forces who sought to defend the rights of the oppressed and ally with their movements were forced to resign. Leniency to criminal thugs and harsh repression of progressives are two sides of the same class policy of defending the authority of the established hierarchy. The same approach played out on every social issue.

Repressive view of all sexuality

From the Roman slave state to European feudal society and then as a major instrument of imperialist conquest, this is a religious institution rooted in class society and patriarchy. This patriarchal heritage is the basis of its repressive views toward all forms of human sexual expression. Gay or straight, married or unmarried, the Catholic Church asserted the right to legislate to society as a whole all forms of human sexual expression.

While taking no action against sexual predators because this threatened the authority and sanctity of the priesthood, Ratzinger was the leading enforcer of archaic religious doctrines on sexuality and the subordinate role of women in the church and in society as a whole. No liberalization on issues of birth control, abortion, divorce or recognition of homosexuality was allowed. Within the Church these rules were enforced through focus on sin and guilt. Gay Catholics, Catholics who remarried, practiced birth control or had an abortion were denied the sacraments, barred from the church or excommunicated.

The full weight of Church institutions with large amounts of funding and political leverage were aggressively used in secular society to oppose liberalization of divorce laws and a woman's right to birth control and to abortion. The Catholic Church organized and funded political campaigns against same-sex marriage and adoption of children by gay couples. But while proclaiming their religious duty to protect the "unborn child," they refused to protect children directly under their control.

As the storm of protest over the attacks on children under their care grew, this reactionary grouping tried to turn its criminal cover-up into a struggle against gay people by linking pedophilia, meaning sexual abuse of young children, with homosexuality between consenting adults.

On April 14, Pope Benedict's top appointee, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, blamed pedophilia on homosexuality, which he called "a pathology." Pope Benedict in a well-known letter to bishops in 1986 described homosexuality as an "intrinsic moral evil." He went so far as to justify and even encourage violent attacks on gay people by stating that "neither the church or society should be surprised if irrational and violent reactions increase" when gay people demand civil rights.

These crimes against all movements of oppressed peoples must be included in the anger directed at the church hierarchy.

The years of repression, witch hunts and organized bigotry have given the Catholic hierarchy less and less a basis of support. They are more out of touch with their own congregation and totally out of touch with the values of society as a whole.

Despite every effort, they cannot go back to their absolute hold of 500 or even 100 years ago, when priests and bishops did not have to account for crimes against women or children or against slaves, serfs, peasants or illiterate workers.

Carefully crafted apologies that accept no blame and scripted public relations meetings with a few selected abuse survivors will not solve the crisis facing the reactionary leadership of the church.

Today those who have suffered abuse have found their voice and have found allies.

The writer attended/survived 14 years in Catholic schools.

Continued from page 8

for him to meet mortgage payments.

The bank refused any loan modification and foreclosed on his home in 2009. Despite delaying court proceedings through various means and attempting to procure Legal Aid assistance, Sadler was unable to prevent his home from being sold to the bank at a sheriff's sale in January.

Sadler was served with a notice of eviction dated midnight May 2.

The homeowner said: "I basically did everything within the system to save my house, and it all came to nothing. We are taking a stand. We are drawing a line in the sand and saying, 'Enough is enough.' We're standing up and we hope others will too.

"We want an indefinite moratorium on all foreclosures. Having people's homes stolen right out from under them by the banks is not acceptable. We must fight back."

Call 419-309-7040 for a schedule of activities to defend Sadler's home. The "Keith Sadler Foreclosure Resistance" can be accessed live on UStream at http://www.ustream.tv/channel/keith-sadler-foreclosure-resistance-live. □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Time for action

It is a time to act. Now. One action is already on the front burner: Boycott Arizona.

Arizona's reactionary ruling class stuck a knife in the back of its half-million undocumented workers with its racist immigration law — a thorn in the side of every decent person. Remove the thorn. Remove the knife. Boycott Arizona.

Mass protests raised this slogan in at least 80 cities on May Day. This idea has arrived. It must only be given organization and shape and turned into deeds. No tourism to Arizona. Picket the Arizona Diamondbacks. Demand your colleges divest from Arizona businesses. Boycott Arizona!

A second action is poised to move to a front burner. Now it needs planting and nurturing. Workers and organizers are going to Washington, D.C., on May 8 to do just this. The Bail Out the People Movement has called an action at the Department of Labor demanding a national jobs program.

Under the pressure of five years of depression and many mass struggles, a president — himself a member of the ruling class and a defender of capitalism — signed the Works Progress Administration into law 75 years ago. The WPA directly created millions of jobs, built roads and schools and museums, produced theater and art and kept people alive with decent jobs working directly for government.

There are 30 million unemployed and underemployed workers in the U.S. now. No trickle-down policies have provided jobs. No "recovery" has recovered their wages. BOPM will demand that the government provide a 21st-century version of the WPA.

Spread the idea. Plant the seed. Only with mass struggle can this be won. But it has happened before. It is eminently believable. And it has every chance of turning into that kind of struggle.

Boycott Arizona! Fight for jobs! □

Elderly gay couple faced horrors in Calif.

By Caleb T. Maupin

Hate crimes against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities are far from rare in the United States. In many cases, it is not just hate-filled bigots who commit these crimes, but the government itself.

A recent case in Sonoma County, Calif., shows how a local government disregarded its own laws in order to terrorize, repress and rob two elderly gay men.

Clay Greene and Harold Scull established legal rights for themselves as a couple despite the bans on LGBT marriage and other efforts to prevent legal recognition of same-sex unions. Scull and Greene had lived together for 25 years and granted each other power of attorney in emergency situations.

In April 2008 Scull tragically fell and was taken to the hospital. Despite having legal power of attorney, Greene was denied even the right to visit his partner.

When Greene attempted to gain his legally established rights, he was forced into a nursing home. Greene's claims of unjust hospitalization were labeled "dementia," and negative stereotypes about the elderly were used to remove his credibility and keep him locked away.

While Greene was confined in the nursing home, the county confiscated and sold all the personal items in the home that he and his partner had amassed together. Their collection of valuable artwork, furniture and even their two cats were auctioned off, with the proceeds going to Sonoma County. The lease on their jointly rented home was declared void by the county, and their home of 25 years was rented to someone else.

After being released from the hospital, Scull was taken to a separate nursing home and not allowed to see his partner. Scull died shortly afterward.

Finally, with the help of a lawyer, Greene was released from the nursing home after being held against his will for two months. The Gay People's Chronicle of Cleveland noted how Greene recalled being mocked by county workers for the grief he felt over his dead partner. (April 23)

Greene is currently suing Sonoma County for the mistreatment, discrimination, theft and illegal confinement carried out against him. But a victory in court will not return the last moments of Scull's life, when Greene was legally entitled to stay at his partner's side and provide him with comfort and love. Nor will it return the possessions the partners held together.

The case of Clay Greene exposes the oppression of the LGBT community and the elderly that is part of the very fabric of capitalism in the United States. In addition to fighting for full legal, economic and political rights for the LGBT community, we need to make our goal smashing the economic root of LGBT oppression and all repression — the profit-hungry capitalist system itself, which promotes discrimination and all forms of abuse in order to serve a few profiteering elites.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

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World's workers sharpen class struggle on May Day

By John Catalinotto

Thessaloniki, Greece

In Nepal, Honduras, Greece and elsewhere around the world, this year's May Day actions went far beyond the traditional workers' holiday by opening major struggles over decisive policies and in some cases over questions of power.

In **Istanbul, Turkey**, straddling Europe and Asia, hundreds of thousands of workers took over Taksim Square. Dozens of workers died of gunshot wounds when attacked by paramilitary forces at Taksim Square in 1977. Last year the Turkish Parliament declared May Day a holiday once again.

In **Palestine**, some 2,000 Palestinians protested Israel's blockade of Gaza and for the right of workers to travel at the Erez crossing into the territory to work.

President Jacob Zuma spoke to a rally in **Durban, South Africa**, urging unity of the 2-million strong COSATU union confederation, the Communist Party and the ruling African National Congress, and promising to introduce laws to regulate subcontracting and outsourcing.

Anti-NATO slogans joined more traditional ones in **Moscow** this year, following the unpopular invitation to NATO officers to join the Victory in Europe Day parade on May 8.

Throughout the world, from Africa to the Pacific Islands, from New Zealand to Russia, workers came out with the expected demands in times of deep capitalist economic crisis: end layoffs, stop cutbacks of government services and so on. In some countries, however, the protests surpassed these limits.

Class struggle at the top of the world

In **Kathmandu, Nepal**, the Maoist-led May Day demonstration of a half-million red-garbed, banner-waving workers and peasants "turned the capital red" and led directly into an indefinite general strike. By May 2 the strike had closed the capital and other major Nepalese cities.

The Maoists — that is, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist, led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda — have been out of the government for almost a year, although they are the largest single party in Parliament. At the May Day demonstration, Prachanda called for the resignation of the current prime minister and for constitutional change. The Maoists put responsibility on the regime for keeping the struggle peaceful.

As of May 3, the strike and the struggle over government power continue in Nepal. India, the regional big capitalist power, has taken the side of the government against the Maoists, as has U.S. imperialism. The masses of activist Nepalese are with the revolutionaries. While the Maoists have powerful foreign enemies, they also have the experience of 10 years of armed struggle — 1996-2006 — that overturned the Nepalese monarchy.

Elsewhere in Asia, there were marches of textile workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of railroad workers in Rawalpindi and other workers throughout Pakistan, with protests in nearly all Asian countries, including those in Australia. In **New Zealand** an unprecedented 50,000 people demonstrated to demand no mining of conservation land.

Resistance still strong in Honduras

In **Tegucigalpa, Honduras**, some 500,000 to 700,000 workers and farmers demonstrated in solidarity with the Resistance Front and against the current Pepe Lobo regime, which they see as a continuation of the coup regime that overthrew Manuel Zelaya last June 28. The march in the capital was the largest of a dozen in the Central American country.

Activists and trade unionists interviewed about the march on YouTube said that "90 percent of the Honduran people are with the resistance." Since June this resistance has unified all the progressive movements in Honduras against the pro-coup regime. They demand a Constituent Assembly that would be an organ of popular power.

The main obstacles to this people's power are the Honduran army and the support the U.S. and other imperialist powers give the Lobo regime. The massive May Day protest has shown the tremendous potential of the resistance movement to reverse this balance of power.

In **Venezuela**, President Hugo Chávez announced a 15 percent increase in the minimum wage this May Day. The May 1 Wall Street Journal headline read: "Venezuela May Day Celebrations Draw Chavez Fans, Opponents." What it left out was that the opponents numbered 200, while the "fans" were closer to a half million.

President Evo Morales in **Bolivia** celebrated the day by announcing the nationalization of three power companies and one utility that had been privatized. Elsewhere in South America and the Caribbean, there were more traditional May Day marches, though there were sharp clashes with police and arrests in Chile and Colombia.

One million defend Cuba

The usual massive and enthusiastic May Day march in **Havana, Cuba**, had a special element this year. In the past few months the imperialist regimes and media not only in Washington but in the European Union have waged a campaign of lies and calumny against the Cuban government and the socialist system on the island.

The imperialists took the anti-socialist writings of one blogger, the suicide of one prisoner — just think of what happens in U.S. prisons in comparison — and the actions of a half dozen "women in white" and blew them all out of proportion.

Thus it was refreshing that once again a million people in Havana, with President Raul Castro presiding, and more in other Cuban cities gathered to show unity against this concerted imperialist attack.

Class struggle in Europe

In Europe, the first sharp test between big capital and the working class is unfolding in **Greece**, where an European Union-International Monetary Fund loan depends on the Greek government's forcing severe austerity on the Greek working class. It was no surprise then, that in Athens and Thessaloniki workers were on the move and young anarchists battled police.

The Communist-led unions insist that the rich should pay for the crisis caused by their capitalist system and by the plundering by the financiers, and not the workers. They have held four limited general strikes so far this year, and the struggle over the austerity program is just beginning.

In the West European countries expecting to be next hit by the debt crisis, protests were also strong. Some 90,000 workers marched in **Lisbon, Portugal**, and another 20,000 in **Porto**. The mood was combative, according to local observers. In Spain, where official unemployment hovers around 20 percent, there were also street demonstrations. □

PUERTO RICO

Students strike to save public higher education

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Thousands of Puerto Rican students, sons and daughters of the working class and some already workers themselves, anticipated May Day actions by defiantly challenging the University of Puerto Rico's board of administrators and the island government in mid-April when they called a student strike to defend affordable public higher education on the island.

By May 3 the strike was in its 13th day and had spread to nine of the UPR's 11 campuses.

Pro-statehood Gov. Luis Fortuño, loyal to big business and its U.S. master, has been imposing neoliberal, anti-people laws aimed at privatizing services and laying off thousands of public workers. His actions included measures supposedly meant to counteract the island's serious fiscal crisis resulting from the U.S.-driven, worldwide economic crisis. These measures would include an increase of the tuition and several other provisions that would effectively lead to privatizing the University of Puerto Rico, the island's largest and most prestigious university.

The striking students issued an open letter explaining that their struggle was for the right of all 4 million Puerto Ricans on the island to have an affordable education. The children of the rich mainly attend private universities in Puerto Rico or the United States, but the UPR is the peoples' university. Students have launched many important progressive struggles there — for example, barring ROTC training on campus — and have joined peoples' struggles outside the university. So it is no accident that the students now are defending this institution tooth and nail.

Founded in 1903 in Rio Piedras near the northern coast, the UPR has grown to include 11 campuses throughout the island, guaranteeing a low-cost quality education to thousands of students. The UPR offers many subsidies, grants, scholarships and work programs that make it accessible for low-income families. It has 500 academic programs at bachelor, master and doctorate levels; associate degrees; continued education; etc.

UPR houses 95 percent of Puerto Rico's scientific research, including in cancer, culture, architecture and many other disciplines. The Rio Piedras campus alone has more than 18,000 students.

Student assembly planned strike

A student assembly on the Rio Piedras campus voted on April 13 to hold an occupation and 48-hour stoppage on April 21, followed by an indefinite strike on April 23 if the administration refused to repeal "C98," the measure imposing higher tuition and affecting students, university employees and professors. They also formed a Negotiating Committee involving the Student Council, the Action Committees and members of the Coalition in Defense of Public Higher Education (CEDEP) and the Committee against Homophobia and Discrimination.

The administration refused to negotiate. The students followed their plan, erecting tents on the campus and staying there, firm and strong despite the administration's immediate use of riot and other police and its attempts to provoke confrontations.

Soon CEDEP, an alliance of university general employees, students and professors, issued a public statement in solidarity with the students and blamed the governor and legislature for reducing the university budget. Actions soon followed these words of solidarity.

The Coordinating Labor Committee and the Broad Front of Solidarity and Struggle, labor organizations that have been fighting for months against cutbacks and layoffs, joined the demonstrations and picket lines. A union of non-teaching UPR employees (HEED) and the Union of University Professors (APPU) also stood before the UPR gates, as did some students from private universities. Religious and social organizations, progressive political parties and even a special demonstration of girls and boys — organized by their mothers — backed the struggle for public education.

Internationally recognized musicians like Dany Rivera and Andy Montañez gave concerts for the students, and several musicians from the Puerto Rican Symphonic Orchestra played. Ricky Martin sent a special message in Twitter and René Perez of Calle 13, who just returned from Cuba, gathered videotaped solidarity statements from dozens of international musicians.

Students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico and from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), a U.S.-based youth group, were among those sending messages of solidarity.

On April 26, while Fortuño gave his address to the Legislature, the labor organizations that usually demonstrate in front of the Capitol decided to instead move the demonstration in front of the UPR in solidarity with the students.

On May Day, students initiated Radio Huelga (Radio Strike) (www.ustream.tv/channel/radiohuelga) to keep the people informed. Even mainstream newspaper El Nuevo Día has a minute-to-minute coverage of the strike.

As of May 3, public support had frustrated the administration's attempt to restart classes and work. This has forced the administration to go back to negotiations. If the student's recent actions are any indication, they will settle for nothing less than what they and the people have demanded all along.

¡Que vivan los y las estudiantes! (Long live the students!) □

MUNDO OBRERO

El verdadero crimen: CAPITALISMO

Continua de página 12

que se pudieran vender. El Departamento del Tesoro y la Reserva Federal, incluyendo a Alan Greenspan, debían estar en la corte para responder a las acusaciones de ayudar y encubrir la especulación masiva que estalló y costó a millones de trabajadores/as sus casas y sus empleos.

Además, Bill Clinton, Robert Rubin y Larry Summers — todos instrumentos de los bancos — debían ser enjuiciados por abrir las compuertas en 1999 a esta orgia de especulación cuando derogaron el Acta Glass-Steagal. Esta legislación del Programa New Deal fue creada para prevenir que los bancos comerciales que prestaban a corporaciones, comerciaran con acciones corporativas.

Resumiendo, todo el establecimiento capitalista, el gobierno y los financieros estaban colaborando para estimular las llamas especulativas. El sistema entero se basa en la explotación de trabajadores/as quienes son los/as que crean toda la riqueza. La parte más grande de esa riqueza es tomada en ganancias por los dueños de la economía — de las fábricas, minas, campos, hospitales, tiendas, etc. Ellos las usan para crear más ganancias.

Si hubiera una investigación de cómo la economía capitalista pudiera "recuperarse" por seis meses mientras la crisis se profundiza para los/as trabajadores/as y las comunidades, demostraría que el capitalismo es un sistema en bancarrota que no puede cumplir con las necesidades de la gran mayoría del pueblo.

El resultado de una investigación hecha por los trabajadores/as solamente podría concluir que el sistema de ganancias debe ser eliminado. Los recursos y los modos de producción y servicios deberían estar tomados por las masas, ser propiedad social y administrados en forma planificada y organizada para distribuir la riqueza basada en las necesidades humanas y no en las ganancias. Esta es la fundación del verdadero socialismo. □

Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Primero de Mayo. PHOTO: FNRP

Brazilian autoworker:

'Our union committed to international solidarity'

Vivaldo Moreira Araujo, president of the Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos, Brazil, spoke at a Global Auto Roundtable held April 24 at the Labor Notes conference in Detroit. This report is based on his remarks and an interview conducted by Martha Grevatt.

São José dos Campos has a population of 650,000, 11,700 of whom work for General Motors. Workers at that plant and two other GM plants in Brazil are fighting many of the same battles as autoworkers in the U.S.

To get workers to take concessions, GM has threatened repeatedly to close the plant in São José dos Campos or to make no new investment. Members of the Metalworkers Union voted down a two-tier wage agreement that would pay new hires 40 percent of what current workers make. They also rejected "flexibilization" of hours — a scheme to allow GM to make employees work a different schedule each day to suit production needs. Now the union is fighting a modified form of flexibilization by which workers would be forced, on management's whim, to work two hours extra and Saturdays without overtime pay.

Brother Moreira Araujo explained that the union opposes flexibilization because the increased hours lead to fewer workers being hired as well as layoffs. The standard workweek now is 44 hours. The union is demanding it be reduced to 36 hours.

More layoffs are caused by line speedup, which has also caused a 30 percent increase in recorded workplace injuries. Most of these are repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome. There are more serious injuries, and each of the three GM plants has had a fatality in the past two years. A worker was crushed in a press. He was working alone when two workers should have been assigned to the job. "Don't forget there are also psychological illnesses that the company does not record," Moreira Araujo noted. A worker recently threw himself to the floor from a high place, attempting unsuccessfully to commit suicide.

GM's newest plant, a 10-year-old plant in the Brazilian city of Gravataí, has the highest rate of injuries. That plant is the worst in terms of speedup and flexibilization. The union there was originally formed by GM as a company union, yet recently it has had conflicts with plant bosses.

Workers are subjected to regular harassment and intimidation. The bosses ally themselves with local elected officials and the media to isolate the union from the broader São José community. Yet, despite fear, concessions get defeated because the union "tells the workers that united we can win, and it builds up confidence."

Moreira and his union believe strongly in the importance of international solidarity. Delegations have met with counterparts in the U.S., Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela. "Building connections is not easy," Moreira Araujo explained, "because the majority of unions are taking concessions. But we are completely committed to building them. It is necessary. Every time we know about a struggle with GM in another country we publicize it. It builds up empowerment."

GM workers in Brazil recently voted to donate 1 percent of their salary to earthquake relief in Haiti. The union has also protested the military occupation of Haiti, in which Brazilian troops are involved.

The Brazilian metalworkers invite autoworkers in the U.S. to attend their Congress, which is being held in June. □

MUNDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Más allá del fraude de Goldman Sachs

El verdadero crimen: CAPITALISMO

Por Fred Goldstein

Banqueros se enriquecen mientras 30 millones de trabajadores/as necesitan empleos

La Comisión de Bolsas y Valores (SEC en inglés), ha puesto demandas sensacionales por fraude a un costo de miles de millones de dólares contra la firma bancaria de inversiones Goldman Sachs. Que esto suceda justo cuando el banco reporta un incremento del 91 por ciento en sus ganancias durante el primer trimestre comparadas con las del año pasado, es seguro que inflame aún más la ira pública contra la institución de Wall Street.

Lo que todo/a obrero/a con conciencia de clase debe tener en cuenta sin embargo, es que la SEC ha señalado sólo una limitada operación de una potencia financiera mundial ladrona, al tiempo que protege de la crítica al resto del sistema bancario y al capitalismo mismo.

Goldman Sachs está siendo acusado de fraude por vender miles de millones de dólares en hipotecas incluidas en bonos, diseñados éstos para que fracasen, sin decírselo a sus clientes. A continuación, Goldman y los clientes para los cuales ha diseñado los bonos dieron la vuelta e hicieron dinero apostando en contra de los mismos bonos que ellos habían creado.

La forma en que Goldman y sus clientes, en particular un fondo de especulación (hedge fund) multimillonario dirigido por John Paulson hicieron dinero, fue asegurando los bonos con el American International Group, obteniendo a continuación un desembolso cuando el valor de los bonos disminuyó. Paulson ganó mil millones de dólares en las transacciones.

"De acuerdo a los documentos de la SEC", escribe Mike Whitney, la firma bancaria "no reveló materialmente las Obligaciones de Deuda Colateralizada Sintéticas (CDO, en inglés) que vendieron a sus clientes. Estas CDO suicidas estaban diseñadas para que estallaran pocos meses después de ser construidas (y así sucedió). Según el ex regulador William Black, 'Goldman no sólo retuvo la información, sino que le decía a la gente, "Oiga, las decisiones de inversión son realizadas por especialistas que escogen sólo material de buena calidad", cuando en realidad, las cosas que se ponían fueron elegidas porque estaban consideradas como las más propensas a sufrir rebajas a corto plazo". Así que engañaron deliberadamente a los inversionistas. Eso es fraude. Tampoco le dijeron a los inversionistas que los valores fueron seleccionados (en parte) por un prominente administrador de fondos de especulación, John Paulson, quien planeaba apostar en contra de la misma CDO". ("Goldman Sachs's Bloody Nose," Counterpunch, 19 de abril)

Un asesor lo describió como el comprar un seguro de incendio para la casa de otra persona, y luego quemar esa casa.

Pelea entre ladrones

Los titulares resuenan como si la SEC se preparara para una batalla épica contra Wall Street. Pero en cuanto a los/as trabajadores/as se refiere, esto es estrictamente una disputa entre ladrones.

Sin duda, la lucha entre Goldman Sachs y la administración de Obama es bastante seria para ambos lados. El contexto es la lucha por la reforma de la regulación financiera, sobre la manera de estabilizar el sistema financiero capitalista. Ambos tienen mucho en juego. Pero los/as trabajadores/as deben fijarse en su propia lucha independiente para influenciar en cómo el sistema financiero les impacta.

El New York Times del 20 de abril dejó en claro una buena parte de lo que se trata esta investigación. La acusación es "que Goldman ideó una inversión hipotecaria compleja diseñada para que se desmorone y luego la vendió a inversionistas ignorantes".

Así que los ladrones de Goldman Sachs engañaron a sus "inversionistas ignorantes", quienes buscaban hacer dinero de las masas mediante el cobro de intereses de las hipotecas de alto riesgo (subprime). Mientras tanto, Goldman también estaba buscando hacer dinero jugando con la imposibilidad de las masas de poder pagar estas hipotecas exorbitantes. Y Goldman fue uno de los promotores más importantes de estas hipotecas tóxicas. De todos modos, Goldman ganó cientos de millones en tarifas por las transacciones.

Desempleo en medio de fabulosas riquezas

Todos los titulares se centran en los cargos de la SEC contra Goldman. Pero por lo que concierne a los/as trabajadores/as, las comunidades, la juventud y los/as estudiantes, hay un escándalo más apremiante. Goldman y los otros banqueros están rodeándose de riquezas, mientras que 30 millones de trabajadores/as necesitan empleos. Esto es un escándalo digno de investigación.

La verdadera indignación en este momento es que Goldman Sachs obtuvo ganancias récord de $3,46 mil millones de dólares en el último trimestre, superando las $3,3 mil millones de dólares de JPMorganChase, pero todavía por detrás de las $4,4 mil millones en ganancias por Citigroup. Mientras tanto, las solicitudes semanales por primera vez para el seguro de desempleo aumentaron de 24.000 a 484.000 a mediados de abril. En la actualidad hay 6,4 millones de trabajadores/as que han estado sin empleo durante más de 27 semanas.

Entre los otros escándalos que necesitan ser descubiertos es el de cómo Goldman Sachs y otros banqueros están extrayendo miles de millones de dólares en intereses de las ciudades. Ciudades y estados a través del país están pagando cientos de miles de millones de dólares en intereses a los bancos mientras que las escuelas, hospitales, programas contra el SIDA y del cuidado de salud (SCHIP) para la infancia se cortan, los/as trabajadores/as del gobierno quedan despedidos/as, y suceden muchas otras barbaridades.

El gobierno capitalista en Washington no quiere iniciar una investigación de cómo los bancos están lanzando a millones de trabajadores/as fuera de sus hogares. Son los bancos los que están detrás de las millones de ejecuciones hipotecarias que han tenido lugar, incluyendo un récord de 250.000 en el primer trimestre de este año. Ellos obstinadamente se niegan a prestar ayuda a los/as propietarios/as, muchos/as de ellos desempleados/as, cuyos ingresos se ha reducido durante la crisis económica. Los banqueros hacen que los alguaciles echen a familias enteras a la calle mientras ellos se sientan cómodamente en sus oficinas y viven en el regazo del lujo.

Los cargos del SEC no tienen sanciones penales.

Si Washington estuviera realmente interesado en cómo los bancos atacan al pueblo, les pondría cargos penales a los banqueros por acciones tales como el cobro de exorbitantes intereses en las tarjetas de crédito y la cosecha de cerca de $40 mil millones en tarifas adicionales solo en el año pasado.

Podría cancelar la deuda en el aumento de los préstamos estudiantiles que han convertido a una generación de estudiantes en sirvientes de los bancos durante años después de graduarse.

Los bancos son legítimamente odiados por el pueblo. Ese odio debe ser dirigido no sólo a los bancos, sino a los bancos como la cumbre de todo el capitalismo. Es la explotación capitalista la base de los bancos, de las corporaciones y de todos los problemas de los/as trabajadores/as.

Las ganancias de banqueros provienen de los/as trabajadores

Las ganancias obtenidas por los bancos provienen de la riqueza creada por los/as trabajadores en primer lugar. Los intereses hipotecarios y el interés de las tarjetas de crédito no son más que un reclamo sobre los salarios de los/as trabajadores después de salir del lugar de trabajo donde son explotados/as por un patrón.

Los impuestos utilizados para pagar los intereses de los banqueros en bonos estatales o municipales han sido tomados de los salarios de los/as trabajadores que vuelven a circular en las bóvedas de los bancos. Los impuestos que las empresas pagan al gobierno salen de los beneficios creados por los/as trabajadores. El fundamento de todos los beneficios es el trabajo no remunerado.

Banca y capitalismo

De hecho, los bancos dominan la industria y están integrados a las juntas y gerentes corporativos. Los bancos y casas financieras que flotan las acciones de las empresas se comunican por teléfono trimestralmente con los altos ejecutivos de las grandes corporaciones. Ellos quieren escuchar sólo cosas buenas acerca de las ganancias de sus inversiones. Los banqueros y financieros pueden obligar a las empresas a cerrar fábricas, bajar salarios, recortar la fuerza de trabajo y aplicar nueva tecnología que destruye puestos de trabajo.

El sector bancario es inseparable del capitalismo. Esta verdad científica basada en un análisis marxista fue elaborada por V.I. Lenin en su obra "Imperialismo, fase superior del capitalismo", escrito en 1916.

Cuando los/as trabajadores de la empresa Republic Windows and Doors, miembros/as del sindicato United Electrical Workers Local 1110 en Chicago, lucharon para prevenir que la gerencia les abandonara sin pagarles sus beneficios e indemnización por despido, se reveló que era Bank of America quien sostenía las finanzas de la empresa. Sólo después de ocupar la fábrica fue posible que los/as trabajadores obtuvieran sus beneficios — del Bank of America.

Cuando Enron colapsó en la mayor quiebra en la historia, destruyendo las pensiones y los ahorros de miles de personas porque los ejecutivos habían participado en una gran red de pirámide económica, los ejecutivos fueron enjuiciados y algunos incluso fueron a la cárcel. Pero tras bastidores, la financiación de esta empresa criminal era JPMorgan-Chase, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, USB y todos los mismos nombres que fueron conectados después con el colapso financiero y los fraudes hipotecarios de alto riesgo.

¡A juzgar patronos y banqueros!

Es el capitalismo el que debería estar en juicio. Por ejemplo, fue el sistema de ganancias el culpable por el asesinato de 29 mineros en la mina Massey en West Branch, West Virginia. Los capitalistas de la industria minera son los dueños de las agencias reguladoras y de los miembros del Congreso que deban hacer cumplir los códigos de seguridad. Pero la producción y las ganancias van primero.

El capitalismo está detrás de las muertes de miles de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as que tratan desesperadamente de cruzar el desierto para llegar a los Estados Unidos a causa del TLC-NA que benefició a la industria agrícola estadounidense pero destruyó la economía de México. Y es el sistema de ganancias que utiliza a trabajadores/as vulnerables sin documentos para exprimirles cada onza de trabajo barato.

Ahora que no se necesita tanto su trabajo por la crisis económica, el capitalismo desata redadas del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional y su Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (SICA/ICE) para buscar y aterrorizar a los indocumentados/as y culparles por la crisis.

Es el capitalismo y la búsqueda de ganancias que unen a las industrias petrolera, minera, de las utilidades y a los grandes industrialistas para parar los intentos de imponer límites en su derecho a contaminar el medio ambiente, la tierra, el agua y hasta el aire que necesitan los seres humanos para respirar. Las ganancias están amenazando al planeta.

La investigación de Goldman Sachs es significativa políticamente para la administración de Obama y para la lucha dentro de la clase dominante que intentan hacer al sistema más estable. Pero en cuanto a reformar el sistema, no es nada más que un acto secundario.

De hecho, el SEC debiera investigarse a sí mismo por negligencia de deberes, por cerrar los ojos mientras los financieros en Wall St. jugaban con un estimado total de $600 billones en derivados, vendiendo hipotecas tóxicas por el mundo, y trazando aún más esquemas creativos para estafar al público.

Debe haber una investigación de Moody's, Standard & Poor's, y todas las agencias de evaluación que categorizaron a los bonos basuras como triple-A para

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